

SAVOIR FAIRE

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FALL 2015 - SPRING 2016



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BOSSIER PARISH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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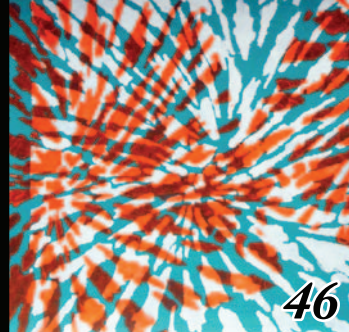
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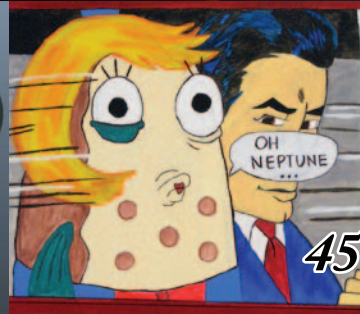
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SAVOIR FAIRE

A literary & visual arts magazine



Fall 2015 - Spring 2016

Volume 59

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Cover Art - *Turner Skies* by Tami Miles

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

In the time that we have been editing *Savoir Faire*, we have seen it go through a great many changes. We now publish annually rather than biannually, we have changed our judging process, increased the size of the magazine, and improved and elevated our release and prize gala. But the greatest change has been something you may not see: passion. The energy our students have put into their work, both in and out of class, has skyrocketed, and that is reflected in what we believe to be the finest magazine we have yet released.

We are so proud of our students and their accomplishments, and our pride extends to our colleagues across campus who are inspiring their students daily to be creative, take risks, and to share their work with all of us. *Savoir Faire* is a perfect reflection of the accomplishments possible when the BPCC family of instructors, administrators, students, and their families come together for a common purpose.

▪ Katie Bickham & John Wagoner, Co-editors

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE TO

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**WE APPRECIATE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS
THAT HAVE MADE THIS MAGAZINE POSSIBLE**



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POETRY

PERENNIAL BLOSSOM

by Vivienne Bonnevier

Death and life,
Borders lie.
Winter shadows Spring.
Butterflies,
Blazing bright,
Feint across the scene.
Sakura,
Petals fall.
Black-ink branches sway.
Quietus maw;
Quaffing all.
Bloom at dusk of day.



EVOLVE

by Celeste Brewer

I'm losing my mind
The world has become blind

We are all wasting precious time
Working overtime
Just to make a dime
While we see nothing but crime
We all just want to shine
But we can't even feel just fine
Seeing that we are all confined
To the believes we can't refine

So now I will decline
While I try to evolve my mind



HARBOR

by Jerred Cook

Damn, it's almost as beautiful as you, this harbor.
I sit here mesmerized by your eyes blue like the current,
My bare feet flooded by the channel.
I swear I see your face as my feet start to prune.
Just as my heart starts to buckle ,
I'm shocked back to life by your touch like a cool draft.

I still hate I had to leave you, damned draft.
At least the trenches weren't as bad as the harbor.
I can still hear the bullets and bombs infamous buckkllllle
Even in the midst of death, you're on my mind currently
The memory of your kiss on my lips like a prune.
Hate and love, two things I still haven't learned to channel

I ask the bar keep to change the channel,
And pass me another draft
The smoke from the bar has turned his skin like a prune.
Some times I think this place is a criminal harbor.
Sprusshhh... damn that beer flows through me like a current,
And I'm too drunk to re-do my belt buckle

Sometimes I still cry, Under the stress I buckle.
There is never anything good on the t.v., I just go through channels,
I usually end up on the news , try to stay current.
I fear they're going to re-initiate the draft,
But I will never see another foreign harbor
The tree of life seems to need a pruning.

Seems like all they let me eat here is prunes,
And I have to use a walker so my knees don't buckle.
First time I lived away from a harbor.
And I hate the perfume my nurse wears, she calls it Chanel.
Sometimes I flip my robe up pretending it caught a draft,
I get a laugh and it keeps the nurses minds current

I keep forgetting things, my mind won't stay current.
My life will go like a leaf after prune.
Standing on the edge I can feel the draft.
I let my body buckle,
On the way down I know I'll be on my favorite news channel,
But in the morning I'll be back by my beautiful harbor



HE LIES AWAKE

by Beven DePalo

He lies awake in the shadows
Pledged by things that cannot be seen
He is drowning in regret
Haunted by forgotten dreams
Running out of time he takes a look at his life
No one is there to comfort him
Not his kids, not his wife
Going through each day
Trying to meet deadlines with such haste
He can't help but to think as his heart flat-lines
That all his hard work was a waste
The signs were always there
To warn of what the future would hold
Foolishly he ignored them
Preoccupied with fine wines, women, and gold
Nothing remains with him now
He has no place left to go
Sealed tight in a box of stone
He lies awake in the shadows
Cold, dead, and alone



LIMBO

by Beven DePalo

In between
Frozen within both today and tomorrow
Seeking the truth behind a clouded mind
And a heart filled with sorrow
Walking down a hallway
No doors leading in or out
Confusion drives me to run
Frustration drives me to shout
How did I get here!
Over and over I scream
I wake up crying
When I realize it wasn't a dream



I AM

by Christian Johansen

I am the sins of your father
I am the punishment of their mistakes
I am the unstoppable flood
I am the ever approaching winter
I am unavoidable
I am the shadow
Inching closer minute by minute
I am pain of a grieving mother
I am the regret of a convicted murderer
I am the fear of a child In the dark
I am the disease that cleared villages
I am the hunger of the man on the street
I am your fucked up thoughts
I am what's wrong with the world



MASKS

by Joseph Manuel

I try to imagine what it would be like if I had the courage to take my mask off and let myself be free. It is a terrifying thought, but at the same time it is exhilarating. To be seen as I really am, no walls or barriers in the way, emotions able to be expressed freely. So why is it that so many of us feel the need to hide ourselves away, to put on fronts of what we think other people want to see. Do we do it to protect them, because if they knew who we really were; they would be frightened of us. Or are we the ones who are frightened, afraid that if we show our true selves it would be too much. Masks are simple and easy and if you put one on long enough eventually you will become it. It becomes harder to tell the real you from the version of you that you present to others. Would the world be better off if everyone had the courage to discard their mask or are they necessary for the world we live. Look in the mirror and see if it's you staring back or someone else.



FIRST WORLD FEARS

by Bridgitte Rankin

As an American I fear
The white, gun-trotting, "Christian" kind
The outspoken and closed-minded
Bigoted and blind

As an American I fear
The heaping hymns of hate
To make America great?
A feared-for fate

As an American I fear
The cuts to education
How it fails us as a nation
Mental damnation

As an American I do not fear
The Muslim family nearby
Who are just as American as I
Tormented and terrified

As an American I do not fear
The Sikh woman on aisle four
The subject of stares at the store
Whose daily life is an infinite war

As an American I do not fear
The migrants from the Middle East
Looking for safety, freedom, and peace
Who also wished the war would cease



KINKY ME

by Patty Scott

Curly, coily, kinky me
This best describes my hair
Unruly, nappy as can be
But this is what I wear

Spiraled tresses, thick and coarse
Full, black and dense
When it's wet, it is the worst
It's wiry, taut, and tense

Kinky hair does what I like
As long as it has oil
If I want my Kinks just right
I must grease every coil

Kinks grow on my arms and legs
These kinks grow everywhere
And yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes
It's even kinky there!



LIFE'S UNBOUND

by Patty Scott

Life's unbound. Where do I go from here?
Do I have the strength to carry on?
Why stand trembling in this shadow of fear?

I've been many places, traveled far and near.
Never really stayed in one place too long.
Life's unbound. Where do I go from here?

Left many souls, for them I shed a tear.
I traveled when I did not have a care.
Why stand trembling in this shadow of fear?

I have grown weary, but I still see clear.
My body and my mind, no worse for wear.
Life's unbound. Where do I go from here?

I have raised my child, no longer here.
Her life is her own to live now.
Why stand trembling in this shadow of fear?

My life's unbound again, no ties appear.

I will live, but I don't know how.
Life's unbound. Where do I go from here?
I won't stand trembling in this shadow of fear.



LITTLE GEORGE STINNEY

by Patty Scott

There was a little black boy, George Stinney
He was only fourteen years old
Two white girls asked did he know where maypops grow
George Stinney politely said no

Those two white girls came up missing
They searched that South Carolina ground
George Stinney was the last to see them alive
That's what they said when the bodies were found

They cuffed George and took him to jail
And he kept asking what did he do?
You raped those two little white girls
You killed them so they wouldn't tell on you

George cried no sir I did not do that
I weigh ninety pounds and I am five feet one
If you admit to this crime you little nigger boy
We'll give you ice cream when we're done

George confessed to doing it
He was hungry, his body worn down
They told him the trial will start real soon
And they ran his family right out of town

George Stinney was finally convicted
June 16th was his execution day
On books he had to sit, because the stuff didn't fit
But they electrocuted him anyway

There have been many who worked effortlessly
They finally cleared George Stinney's name
The guilty (white) man gave a death bed confession
But George Stinney is dead just the same

HE KEEPS BLESSING ME IN SPITE OF MYSELF

by Josephine Sears

I know what it is like to think you have it all, but to pretend and not be happy at all.

To think it is going to be like this forever, I can handle anything even the stormy weather.

To be strong as others need me to be, but scared inside crying “Lord it is only me”. He knows me better than most and he keeps on blessing me in spite of myself.

I try to pretend I am strong as can be. I have done this all alone, no help, no not for me. I turn around and wonder why do we pretend and lie?

Then I stop and realize he loves me above all and no matter how I stumble he

will never let me fall. He keeps blessing me in spite of myself.

When my back is up against the wall, and do not know what to do or who to call. I turn to my Jesus and takes care of it all, he keeps blessing me in spite of it all.



WHY

by Melissa Sisemore

i'm dirty, naked, unclean
but You spread your cloak over my nakedness
why?
You spoke to the woman at the well
told her everything she'd done
why?
people say that a leopard can't change its spots
they all hold stones
why?
You say all sin is equal
if you think it your heart it's the same as if you did it
why?

I love you
I made every part of you
that's why.
I speak to everyone equally
choose people no one else would
that's why.
you're beautiful, you're mine
let those who are sinless cast the first stone
that's why.
all have fallen short of My glory
I came to earth to save you
that's why.



THE BEAST WITHIN

by Brittani Sparks

Darkness festers deep inside me.
I only know one way to cope.
I look in the mirror and fear who I see.

Dilated pupils stare at me.
I have lost any kind of hope.
Darkness rages deep inside me.

I see the pain I've caused and need to flee.
Hanging from this tightly wound rope.
I look in the mirror and hate who I see.

What can I do to set myself free?
To keep from drifting down this slope?
Darkness remains deep inside me.

God, take me away. Answer my plea.
I soothe my mind with a shot of dope.
I look in the mirror; it's too blurred to see

My inner beast is fed and at ease.
I forgot what it's like to ever feel hope.
Darkness subsides deep inside me.
I can't find the mirror. I don't know what I'd see.



NAKAMA

by Jordan Stephens

Cries end and with that
The bloodshed begins
You are a worthy foe
And out comes the steel blade of night
Why I prefer my, blade of light
As I said the bloodshed will begin
In which only one can win
Light and dark
Kindness and hate
This is what ties us as
Opposites
But also brings us as friends
Foe you have been,
But friend
You once were
I am truly honored
To have our blades decide our faith.



FOR ADDI

by Hayden Thorn

You never stay gone,
but return to me
when my pain has
all but vanished.

Your love leaves
lasting lesions
that withdraw from me
more than they provide.

You possess me
without touch,
restrain me
with ease.

I will be free
of your love
but only
in death.



SCORNED

by Hayden Thorn

Love engulfs my veins
My face is warmed by fire
My mind, a canvas stained.

First times, hard to explain
There's pain, but much desire
Glee engulfs my veins

Aroma of butane
Flickers from the fire
My mind, a canvas stained.

Your pleas are all in vain
Mercy is a satire
Wrath engulfs my veins

Screams like acid rain
Flesh bubbles on the pyre
My mind, a canvas stained.

Flames no longer reign
Your heart declares cease-fire.
Joy engulfs my veins
My mind, a canvas stained.



XXV

by LaDestiny Williams

Penny for your thoughts
Quarter for your crisis
No, my daughter wasn't kidnapped by ISIS

She's insane you see
She's lost her memory
She won't get help
She fucking hates me

She thinks I took her baby
What left of it there was
She thinks I made her abort it
In the tub

Now she thinks that
The doctor is telling a tale
She won't stay off that damn
Cell

So what should we do doc
Pray tell?
She's had an epiphany
We'll just tell her
She's going to hell



FOOL'S GAME

by LaDestiny Williams

Lady Justice be kind
Lady Justice be good
Lady Justice tell him
This trick is up to no good

Her love will be your doom
I don't care if she feels good
She only causes pain
What can you expect
From one who is insane?

But we all know what they say
Only fools fall in love
And they are often prone
To doing it again



TU ES FOLLE?

by LaDestiny Williams

The mind is an illusion.
It's an art. I've wrought it
from clay. But I smashed
it and called it a day.

The mind is an ocean
It stretches on for miles
The brain is my boat
But the mind is my ship.

The mind is my lover
It whispers sweet words.
The mind is my enemy
With poison soaked lips.

The mind is a place
where I lie at night
The mind is my foe
But I won't give up the fight



THE SUN ALSO RISES

by LaDestiny Williams

She was young and naive
Perfect for grooming
He was older and startling
Perfect for the doing

She idealized him
Thought the sun
Rose above his head

He fetishized her
Lust grew from
Between her legs

Scorching hot
The temperature rises
The plumage is slowly
Dying.



BIRTHDAY BLUES

by LaDestiny Williams

Hello you
It's your birthday
What to do
What to do

As life ages you
The memory goes
No more youthful dew
Now your body is betraying you

The days are shorter
The years shorter still
Soon soon there'll be no you
So it's your birthday dear

What are you going to do?



DROPLET OF BLOOD

by Chase Zittrauer

The droplet of blood
Which falls from
My arm,
Is
The last vestige
Of the pain
Which once stood
There,
Within that crimson
Tear,
Is an entire universe,
An alternate
Reality,
Where the air
Burns,
And the masses
Stare,
But that pain
Has been
Usurped,
Dethroned
By
Synthetic
Peace
Triumphant.



ARTWORK

STILL LIFE

by Heather Beauvais



CAROLINE'S MAZES

by Mary deMarigny



SHADOW PUPPET

by James Ducas



BLOOM

by Emily Duckworth



THE LITTLE MERMAID

by Hannah Edwards



MONOCHROMATIC STILL LIFE

by Jeff Edwards



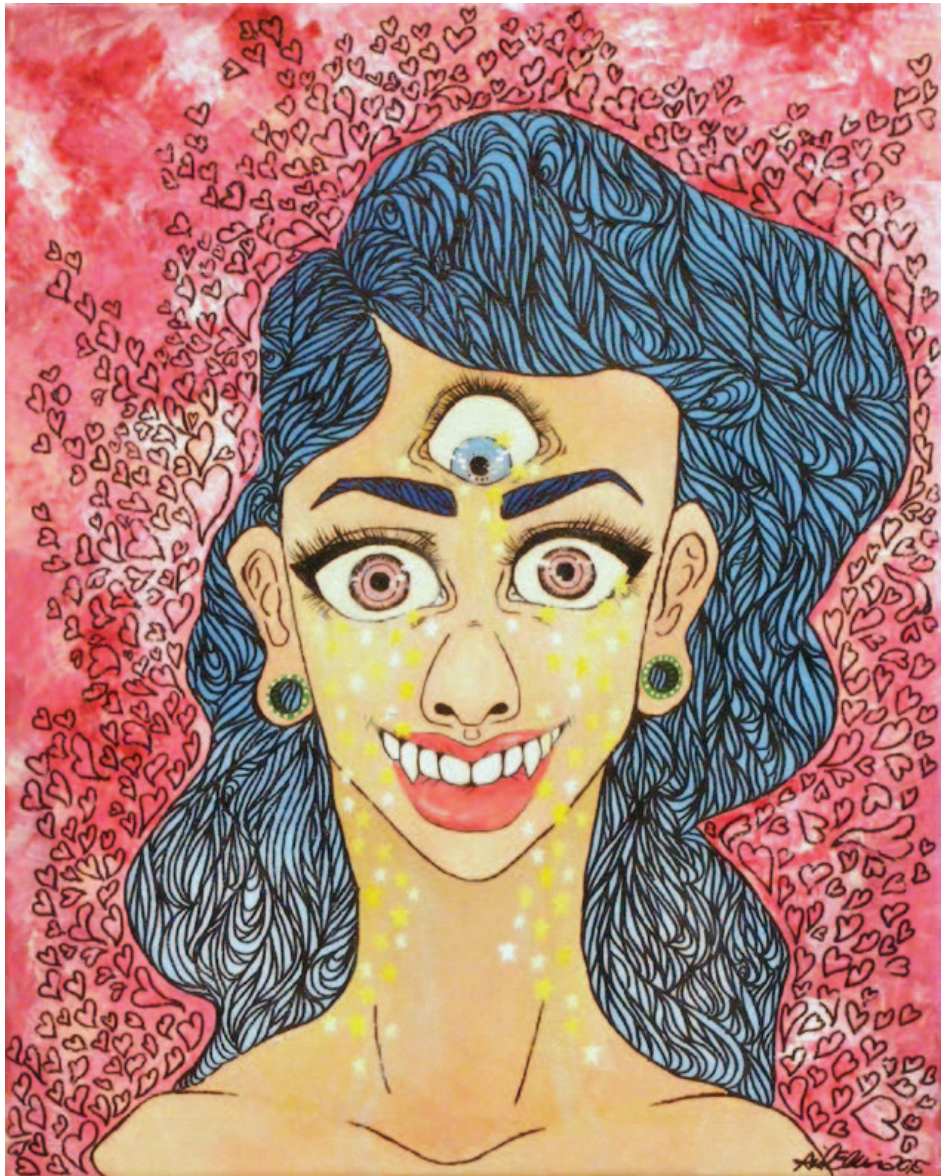
OUTLINED IN BLUE

by Noel Elias



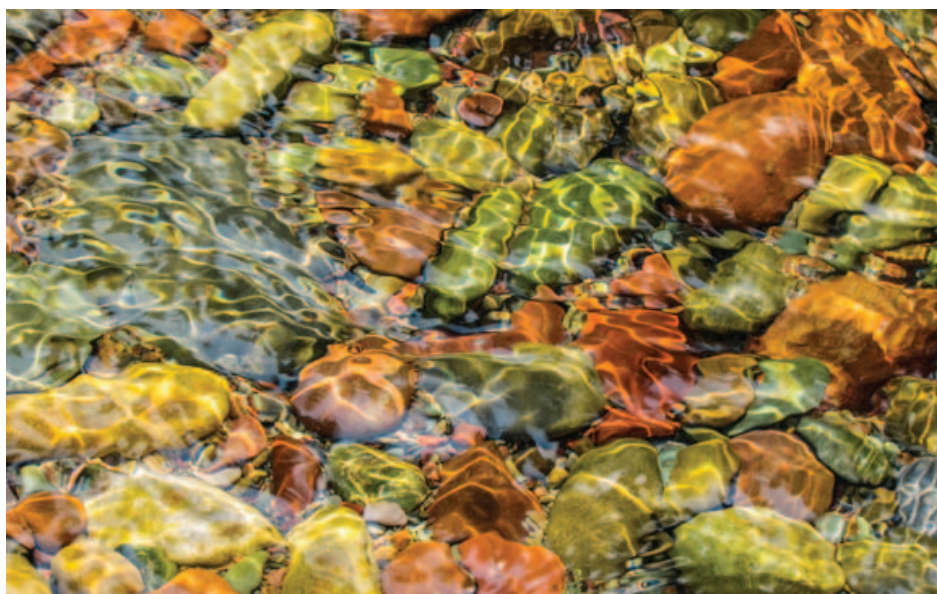
UNTITLED

by Ariel Ellison



HEARTSEASE

by Brandie Ferguson



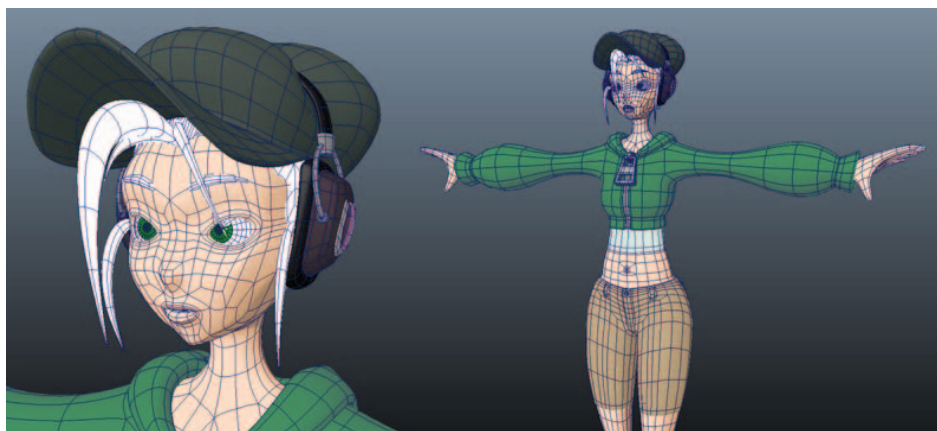
STILL LIFE

by Gabriel Flippo



DJ OMI IN DEVELOPMENT #2

by Chris German



DJ OMI IN DEVELOPMENT #4

by Chris German



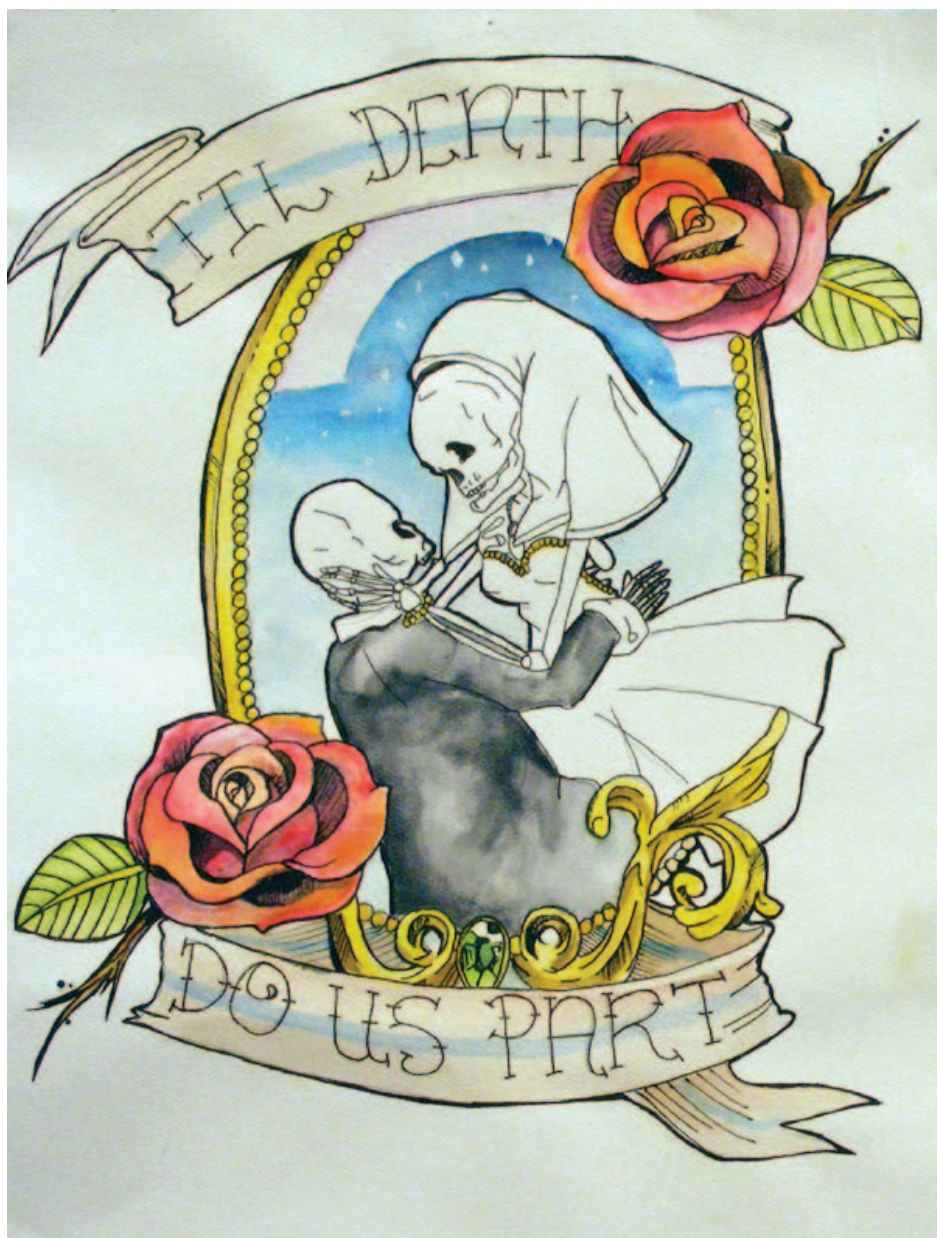
SLEEPING SNORLAX

by Victoria Greenwood



TIL DEATH DO US PART

by Victoria Greenwod



LONELY KNIGHT

by David Guthrie



CEZANNE'S TULIPS

by Katie Hay



COMPLEX

by Jaccorian Jackson



INFLECTION

by Katherine McCormick



TURNER SKIES

by Tami Miles



FEEL THE MUSIC

by Tami Miles



LICHTENSTEIN IN BIKINI BOTTOM

by Bridgitte Rankin



ORANGE, WHITE, TEAL #2

by Mary Rankin



LONG DAY

by Mary Rankin



THE LOVERS

by Raenah Schneider



RUBY ZOISITE

by Tiffany Scott



CASSIDY

by Raleigh Shelton



WORDS FAIL ME

by Anna Strebeck



UNTITLED

by Christopher Taylor



UNTITLED

by Tiffany Smith



PROSE

SURVIVOR

by Anonymous

Like many people, I thought of breast cancer as an older woman's disease, and it is more common in women above fifty years of age, according to the American Cancer Society. However, it can occur in younger women and even men. The day I found out cancer cells had formed in my breast, at age thirty-eight, was a shock. That day marked the beginning of my victorious fight against a silent killer. For me, early detection, quality medical care, a positive attitude, and support from others was key to beating this disease.

Doctor Walker's early detection saved my life. It was January 2013 when she discovered a lump in my left breast during a routine medical examination. I was a little surprised, but not overly concerned. As a non-smoking gym freak with no family history of breast cancer, I thought I was safe. However, after an MRI and biopsy, I found I was far from safe from the evil clutches of breast cancer. The MRI deemed the lump benign, but revealed a suspicious mass in my other breast, which led to a biopsy. Five days after the biopsy in April 2013, a feeling of disbelief flowed through me, "Mrs. O the biopsy results are positive, cancerous cells are present" the voice coming out of my cell phone said. I was shocked as I did

not look or feel ill. It took weeks for the news to sink in. An image of me with two holes in my chest played over in my mind. Over the next nine months, I travelled down the road I found myself on. Due to early detection and quality medical care, I battled breast cancer head on.

Between July 2013 and April 2014, the medical care I received was outstanding. Over the course of three surgeries and numerous outpatient appointments, I had both breasts removed and replaced with implants. This procedure is known as a double mastectomy with reconstruction. My breast surgeon and reconstruction surgeon shared their breast cancer knowledge with me. Both explained all steps and objectives clearly; they drew diagrams and showed me photos of the stages of the procedure. Nurses took excellent care of me post-surgery in the hospital until I was released home; they discharged me with a morphine pump and prescription pain medicine. Aftercare was excellent; I was given a twenty-four hour contact number to call to reach my surgeon in the event of an emergency. Later, I was given exercises to do to regain movement in my arms and chest. This quality care, along with my positive attitude, were key factors to ridding my body of its unwelcome guest.

I am a great believer in positive attitude, hence, falling apart was not an option for me. I spoke to another breast cancer survivor and armed myself with as much knowledge as I could about what to expect from the surgeries. I told myself this was only a temporary period in my life, and remained positive at all times. My inner strength and courage took over as I looked to the future when the fight would be over, until then, I had support from loved ones.

My support network consisted of my husband and friends. My husband took time off work and looked after me while I recovered from surgery. I was showered with flowers, balloons, get

well cards and phone calls from family. Friends visited and brought meals. Doctor Walker and her nurse took part in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure in my honor. They wrote my name on the participant signs pinned to their t shirts. All of these actions meant so much to me, warmed my heart and cheered me up. Just over eighteen months later, I am used to my new shape and implants. I am back to health and exercise regularly, as I did before my surgeries. Early detection in the form of self-exams and medical screening is important for men and women, so check yourself regularly. In my case, it was caught early enough and along with quality medical care, my positive attitude and support network; I beat breast cancer. I am a survivor.



THE BOY IN RED

by Gabriel Flippo

“He was raw and sharp and rich and throbbing
with life. He was sweet blood after a long hunt.”

-Annette Curtis Klause

He was found, body mutilated, eyes clouded over staring into the gray sky with tear stained cheeks. Dirt cramped his fingernails as he lay in the red viscera that was once his body. It was impossible

from first sight to see where the blood started as it seemed to tie into the red of his shirt, flowing as one, like a sea of wine---in complete contrast to the black of his hair. It would take a total of three days for him to be found by a hiker who had taken a wrong path through the woods that neighbored the town, but, of all the horror that was the remains of his body, the talk of the town was that of the red peonies that surrounded him, scattered amongst the forest floor.

“God I have a headache.”

I still couldn’t believe I had been dragged into this. It’ll be fun they said. You’ll have a good time. Total bullshit, I thought. The music of the small club was blaring and the heat of the bodies dancing to the beat was overwhelming. It was Elisa’s birthday and the girls decided a night out at the club would be perfect for the newly single birthday girl, and by *decided* I mean overruled. I was all for the comforts of a night of wine and gossip...indoors...at home.

“Quit being a drag and have FUN,” Elisa hollered, along with a few yells of excitement from the crowd.

“Yeah, you’re being such a downer. It’s starting to affect my buzz...buzzzzzzzzzz,” said Holly in her drunken state, to which she went into a fit of giggles. Elisa and Holly have been friends since their early childhood years, becoming friends when Holly offered a piece of candy to Elisa when she fell and hurt her knee on the sandbox. Since then, they have become like sisters with nearly identical personalities. There are even some who would say they can read each other’s thoughts. On the other hand, I’ve only known Elisa for the past couple of years since she had split coffee down my shirt and then paid for the cleaning. She was nice, but sometimes she could get a little “*wild*.”

“Whatever. You guys aren’t the one with a deadline due at

work tomorrow.”

“Well it sucks to suck,” said Elisa. “But you need to get out more, I mean, when was the last time you went out on a date? Seven months since Luc?”

“Yeah.”

It still hurt to talk about it, the way the relationship ended. Luc and I had been together for two years, and the time we had together was special, but seven months ago he was in an accident. He had stumbled out of a bar, drunk, and was hit by a driver who was more worried about the text he received from his friend than the road that he was currently driving on. I had bottled up my emotions for days and haven’t gone on a date since.

I look out among the crowd of dancers, eyes darting from body to body, the slick flesh that hummed with life and the promise of future iniquities. I wish I could be like them. Not a care in the world, as if I wasn’t hounded every hour by some big shot who thinks it’s fun to harass the people who actually get the work done. Although, being an editor’s assistant does have its perks, like getting to read the books before their release, and then attending parties celebrating the release of the books.

I surveyed the crowd, and a black skull came into view. I look up to its owner to find a set of eyes gazing back at me. I held the stare for a minute, then quickly looked away. *Creepy* I thought.

The boy ran through the woods as fast as his legs could take him. Trees zipping past him in a blur, he hit a root and tumbled, the world spinning round and round as he went until he hit a tree and came to an abrupt stop. The bark digging into his back and ripping the skin from his flesh, causing the blood to pool as it dribbled down to the forest floor, staining the ground red. His breathing ragged,

heart beating against his ribcage, he got back up and began to limp away.

“Earth to Chase, are you listening?”

“Sorry, I kinda spaced out a little. What were you saying?”

“Well, we were just discussing why you should go home with a guy tonight, or girl. Whatever you need.”

“What! No...no no no no no.”

“Come on, why not? You’ll have fun,” Holly said with a smirk. “Just think of it as the long awaited rebound.”

“I don’t know,” I said nervously.

“Chase you need this. I’m tired of seeing you all down in the dumps, and, well...it’s pitiful that is has come to the point of intervention. Just look around to see if anyone peaks your interest.”

I looked around the room in search of the person who would be my rebound. A lot of the guys and girls here were lacking in the clothes department so it left little to the imagination. Everyone looked so dirty out on the dance floor and well, that looks really unhygienic, and I didn’t want to be attacked by stench. I decided to look around the bar area, where clothes were mainly kept on, but still no one peaked my interest. I turned back to Eliza and Holly and gave them the most bored and empty look I could muster.

“Sorry, there’s no one here,” I said which gained an exasperated sigh from Eliza.

“No one? No one at all? You do realize this isn’t the Bachelor, right,” Eliza asked. I was about to answer when Eliza held up her hand. “No, don’t answer that, it’s rhetorical,” she said, along with a snicker from Holly.

“Whatever, I’m leaving. If I’m going to stay out all night and miss the deadline at work anyway, I might as well spend the night

somewhere I enjoy. Anyway, happy birthday Eliza I hope you have a goodnight. See you later Holly.” I said gathering my things and leaving some money on the table.

“Wait! Where are you going?” Holly asked.

“I think I’m going to go to the poetry club down the street.”

“Ok...don’t forget to SNAP,” hollered both Eliza and Holly, each making small snapping motions with their fingers which were quickly mimicked by the small crowd around them.

I laughed and then made my way through the crowd and soon enough I was closing the door and making my way down the street to the small poetry club.

He collapsed, exhausted, his breathing coming out in small wheezes as he lay there on the forest floor gazing up at the night sky. Tears lined the edges of his eyes as they began to slowly fall, coating his cheeks and leaving the faint taste of salt along his tongue. A twig snapped and footsteps echoed in the distanced. His heart beats faster and faster as the sounds grew closer.

The poetry club was a small place imbedded between a vinyl record store and an old bookstore, but to me it was a second home. I loved it there. The owners were nice and the crowd was always a sight for sore eyes. The fun thing about the club, was that everyday a topic was assigned, and only poems relating to that topic would be read. Tonight the topic was fairytales. There was a meek group in the store, so I easily found a table to occupy. I sat my stuff down and listen to the poets speak from the heart, feeling their soul through their words.

I sat there for some time listening and watching the crowd react to the poems, and I was just getting ready to leave with the

owner announced the last speaker. I looked up and saw him. Walking up to the stage was the most mesmerizing man I had ever seen. His hair was black like the night, shaved at the sides and the front falling right above his eyes. I could tell that he was nervous, his hands toying with the hem of his Henley, which was the bloodiest of any red. He walked to the center of the stage, and from the light could tell that he was no more than twenty-two, and he began to recite his poem. It was a poem similar to that of the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, but in his version the Wolf and Little Red lived happily ever after together within the woods.

After the poem was done the boy exited the stage and went over to the small bar. I followed him with my eyes and decided whether or not if I should go talk to him. Eliza and Holly's image formed in my brain and I could see them yelling at me saying, Chase you get your ass over there and man up. I couldn't help but laugh to myself.

I walked over to the bar and found an empty seat next to him. I did quick glances out of the corner of my eye trying to settle my nerves but it was now or never.

"You know you were really good up there. Your poem was amazing," I said quickly, trying my best not to sound too obvious.

"Oh, uh thanks," he said nervously. I couldn't help but notice the blush that slithered up his neck. It was *cute*.

"What's your name?"

"My name's Ethan, yours?"

"I'm Chase. This might be weird, coming from a total stranger and all, but could I, like, buy you a drink? I mean, you are like this really great poet an all, and cute too. But I was really hoping to buy you a drink and see if you free sometime," I stuttered out, words colliding to make a jumble of word vomit. The boy laughed and it was

deep. The kind of laugh that was sincere in all regards to the situation.

“I would really like that a lot,” Ethan said with a big smile that threatened to split his face from ear to ear.

The Man appeared from the trees and slowly walked over to the boy. The Man knelt down, his hand coming up to move the hair from the boy's eyes.

“You really are beautiful...just like Luc,” the Man said.



ON THREE

by Cody Gibbs

The air was hot, humid and blowing strong at 708ft above the Bloukrans River which presented a sight of deathly consequences if something were to go wrong. The valley was filled with luscious green vegetation that to John, presented an eerie beauty at that height. Everyone seemed to be nervous along with John as his wife pushed him closer and closer to the front of the line.

“You sure this is a good idea?” John asked his wife.

“You wanted this,” she said. “Plus we spent all this money.”

“Yeah, but this doesn't seem safe,” he said, looking at his belly. I haven't done anything resembling this for years now. What if my body falls apart?”

“You make it sound like you're an old fart.”

“Kinda!”

They both approach the first counter to get fitted for a harness. The instructor asked for their weight to ensure safety “120lbs and he is 220lbs,” she said.

John looks at her “I still don’t know about this.”

“There’s nothing to worry about,” she said. “I’ve done this before. How can I have more balls than you?”

“It’s not that”, John said. “It’s just this feeling I have about today.”

There was an eerie silence in the air as two vultures flew directly underneath the bridge, as if waiting for a quick meal. He noticed a coyote to the left on the upper part of the ridge eating something that used to be alive, but could not recognize what it used to be.

He leaned over to his wife “You see that?”

“Yeah, and?” She said.

“That might be me in a few minutes,” he said.

“Oh my God,” she said. “Stop being such a little baby.”

John looked at her with an annoyed facial expression and said “I’m sorry I actually think about important things such as my life!”

Right then, a bystander behind them in line who overheard the conversation chimed in and said to him “It really isn’t that bad”.

“See,” she said. Just then the wind kicked up and hit his face.

“Can’t you feel that wind that’s signals uncertainty?”

“Stop being so paranoid”, she said. “I’ve already paid for the both of us so you’re going.” “Ugh”, John said with a disgruntled look on his face. “Just because you paid for this doesn’t mean I have to do it. I mean why can’t we just enjoy the scenery together of this beautiful valley with all that green lighting up as if the sun was being directly reflected off the ground itself?”

“Because I have already paid for this to happen and you were the one initially who wanted to go”.

“So guess what?”

“What?”

“We’re going”

“I’m not going”

“Yes you are”

“No I’m not”

As John and his wife got louder the bystander asked “Hey John. Why did you want to go in the beginning?”

He replied, “I this as an option in a brochure we got at the hotel and thought that would be pretty cool, but now that I’m here and standing 708ft in the air above nothingness it doesn’t seem that appealing anymore.”

“John, look at those birds,” she said.

“Yeah, I see them.”

“Wouldn’t you want to fly like that?”

“Maybe If I had the anatomy of a bird” John said with a condescending tone.

Closer and closer they came to the front of the line. The closer they approached the stronger the wind coming off of the ridge became. You could almost hear Johns heart flutter with the wind.

“ONE! TWO! THREE!” shouted the instructor at the front.

At the front all John could hear was the sound of screams and applause.” Good job! “said the instructor.

“Hear that?” she said. “This is what we came for. I didn’t come to die like those animals on the ridge”

“Everything around here points to death” John said. “I’m not too keen on getting myself or you for that matter killed for a cheap thrill.”

“Were not going to die”

“Hey man” said the instructor. Bungee cords like these and support 113kg at 100% elongation. They also have a minimum of 50,000

flex cycles so don't be worried"

John said to his wife "I don't understand anything of what he just said but it doesn't make me feel any better about this."

"I don't know, that sounds like they know what they're doing"

She asked him "Do you love me?"

"Yes, of course I do"

"Then please do this with me"

"So you're going to play a guilt trip on me?"

She responded "Sure am."

He took one last look onto the valley floor and said, "Ok but if I die I will haunt you forever"

"OK", she said happily.

Now they were one man away from the front and the scenery is as beautiful as ever, but now John is starting to let go and take in his surroundings of how beautiful everything is and what he felt when he saw this in the brochure for the first time.

"You know what" John said. You only live once"

He stepped to the edge with his wife and only then saw the sky in front of him and the feel of his wife's hand gripping his.

"ONE! TWO! THREE!"



THE SAD KIDS

by Chris Gonzales

I opened my eyes to the sounds of dinging beeps and a calm voice telling me to wake up. There instead of floating down the river of the damned, I was hermetically sealed into an ambulance. The ferryman and the paramedic fought for control but the desire to sleep was too great - *and my eyes began to surrender*. I could feel the ambulance pick up speed and the frantic tone of my failing savior before the dark dreamless sleep swept over me once again.

My taste for death had been extinguished, but I knew that death might win. I was scared, beyond the boogie man under the bed or the devil in my dreams. I didn't want this anymore, but I couldn't wake up - *at least not until a fire hose was shoved up my nose and down my throat*.

My eyes shot open. The cold life taking darkness had giving way to a thousand suns. Pain pierced my skull and throbbed like a thorny elephant heart, but the sweet pain had over taken the bitter peace. I was alive!

There were tubes stuck in places I need not mention. With these new appendages came a shame I had never known. Pride piercing stares and disappointed sighs, left me questioning my new found sense of self-preservation. My taste for death had been expelled in a fountain of projectile charcoal vomit. A moment that left one ceiling needing to be repainted, and a very, very unhappy nurse needing a new pair of orthotic shoes.

The next day was spent testing for any permanent damages I may have done. What the doctors didn't understand was that I was ready to live. I wanted to live like Ebenezer Scrooge or George Bailey wanted to live. I wanted to dance on the roof and scream at the passing clouds, but one doctor said that this was a natural reac-

tion to my near success. My problems still existed and I needed to go somewhere for a while - *somewhere that I could get better*. They coated the description of this mythical place with a sugary veneer and painted an image of a tropical respite just eight floors away.

There is a sterilized quietness in a hospital at night - *it is anything but calming*. Sounds of pistons breathing for the dead and silent pleas for dignity where none can be had. I was paraded through the wing, the boy who tried to take what all of you so desperately wish to keep. Slowly I was wheeled to the oversized elevator and the orderly pressed the number eight.

Ascending in the cavernous elevator in silence was more unsettling than my trip through the ICU. Quietly we rose, heading towards my island of salvation. A giant of a man- *who looked like he wanted to be anywhere else than here*, was the motor to my chair. I watched as the numbers blinked to life and were then extinguished. Five. Six. With every number that passed the feeling that I had been dooped bubbled closer to the surface. Eight. The doors opened and an empty hallway laid ahead. My heart dropped to the floor. We moved quietly, but with a sense of purpose towards the ominous door. We passed the institutional furniture and reached the entrance to my spa. A door stood there in front of us that could survive a nuclear blast. I tried to stand- *just to peer through the super tiny window*, when a meaty hand convinced me to sit back down. A sudden desire to vomit washed over me again.

There was a sickening buzz-click and the door opened with a heavy groan. I knew then that this was not an island respite - *it was jail*. I was going to crazy jail. Inside I was finally allowed to stand, and what I saw was alarming. A nurse's station with the oldest living nurse on earth, flanked by a chain of payphones and a common room shrouded in darkness.

The nurse of the living dead looked and spoke like a reanimated corpse. She informed me that I was to have no shoe laces, belts, or headphones, and I would remain on under observation for the foreseeable future. She said all this while escorting me to my room. The door swung open revealing two beds, a giant window and a small TV set into the wall. I was handed my linens and a menu card that I was to fill out immediately. Like a Sargent from the Great War- *that she was probably in*, I was also informed that lights were out at ten TVs off at eleven and I was to be out of bed by eight. I handed my card back and she performed an about face, goose stepping out the door, leaving me alone for the first time - *since my decision*. I walked to my massive window and looked beyond the chicken wire and bars. In the distance I could see the fires from the refinery, and a small fleck of moonlight that was peeking through an overcast night sky. There I stood thinking about how all this came to be and how I came to be here.

Lying in my bedroom back home, in the dark, dismal, dank basement, I listened to my younger brother sleep, silently building up my resolve to do what must be done. I crept out of bed and up the stairs, skipping over the creaky ones, to our outdated bathroom. In the darkness of the waning night, surrounded by the orangish brown yellowy colors of our bathroom, I stood in front of the faded mirror and fought the squeaky cabinet door open. There I found the tools of my demise. I quietly tip toed to the basement stairs, so I did not alert my step father who was stirring in his own darkness, getting ready for his own purgatory.

Back in my room, I curled up to the cold plastic and hid my intentions. I drifted into a sleepless dream imagining all the people who wouldn't know I was gone, and all the days that would be unaffected. I pretended to be asleep when my brother woke. He

always awoke ready to seize the day - *but this day I was ready for mine to cease*. I knew he would be the only one that cared enough to place the toll upon my eyes.

An illness loomed over me. So when I said I was sick- *I didn't lie*, but the illness wasn't in my stomach. He left before the sun had risen and I began to ingest the darkness. There alone in the basement, where it was forever midnight, I began the long trek towards the River Styx.

At first just the one, then a few, then whole handfuls. I washed those deadly pellets down with diet Pepsi. A few became hundreds quickly, then the woozy wandering begat the fretful stomach churning sleep. The sleep that tried to lead me to the ferryman.

In my sleep, or in my death, I began to shake. At first with just the lightest of quakes. Then that shaking became more violent and ferocious. The shaking was then followed by the agonizing screams of a boy. A blast of cool air burst into my lungs, driving the ferryman back and hurled me into the world of the living - *back into my self-induced reality*.

Staring out at the fires of the refinery I realized then that my freedom was gone. Everything welled up within me and I began to cry. I was scared, sad, disappointed and ashamed - *how could I ever make this ok*. That night I cried until all that remained was to sleep.

The next morning I walked out of my room not knowing what to expect. To my surprise I wasn't the only kid. There were four others and one of them was a girl from my school. We had never really talked but here in this world we were best friends. All of us were there under false pretenses, none of us truly belonged there - *not with the truly crazy*. One guy thought he was Abraham

Lincoln, and in all actuality he really did look like him. Why they would put a bunch of sad kids amongst the truly crazy was beyond me. We had found a common goal: to get one of the crazy people to give us a cigarette. We did- *many, many times*. One of the various downsides of being in crazy jail is that all the lighters are under lock and key. We had accumulated at least a full pack of miscellaneous cigarettes, when we figured out that the toaster could light a cigarette. The next couple of weeks was spent smuggling cigarettes and a toaster back and forth to my bathroom – *surprisingly it always smelled like Right Guard in there*. Every evening before lights out we sat in our doorways talking – *and flirting*, just acting like normal young people. We were all there under false pretenses.

Over the course of a few days, my mental ward school mate, had become more and more withdrawn from our clique. On this evening in particular she just walked into her room and closed the door, leaving us to finish the nightly ritual on our own. Nobody seemed to care or even notice – *but I was definitely concerned*. After lights out I laid in bed thinking about my neighbor across the hall – *not in the normal way*. I was very concerned. I knew it was against the rules, but I had to go check on her. I waited by my door and listened for any footsteps- *silence was all I could hear*. Slowly I unlatched the door and quietly swung it open- *just wide enough to poke my head out*. The prison warden was at her desk. So I waited for her to go check on the crazies and I hurried across the hall.

I quietly opened the door and whispered her name – *but did not receive an answer*. So I tip-toed into her room uninvited. As I came closer to her bed I realized she was naked on top of her sheets and blood was pouring from wounds on her wrists – *she had done it the right way*. A silk flower, with the serrated metal thing, that laid on the floor in a pool of blood. Jagged and rusty, she had

sawed at her arm for God knows how long. I grabbed the pillow cases and wrapped them as tight as I could around her wrists. I placed a blanket over her naked bloody body. Through her pail blue lips she begged me not to tell the nurse - *she made me promise*. To this day it is the only promise I have broken intentionally. I gathered up her sheets and told her I was going to get her some new ones. As soon as I left the room I ran to the night sentry and told her about my dying friend. A horrifying look of terror came over the old nurse's face - *she looked amazingly human*. Her hand shot towards a button and a continuous flashing light pulsed above my friend's door. I ran back to my room, because the thought that I would have to see my friends pale weak body or worse, her broken hearted stare, was terrifying. Through my tear choked eyes I gazed out at the familiar fires that shone against the night sky. Sadly I listened to my poor friends pleading screams as they drug her limp body off of the eighth floor. There, looking out at my eternal flame, I knew that all of us truly belonged there and that we were definitely not there under false pretenses.



CHALLENGE, ACCEPTED

by Kristina Luck

Sarah looked into the mirror as she applied eyeliner to her upper lid. An array of makeup scattered across the vanity counter in front of her. It's been a long time since she has gone to this much trouble to look good. Usually, she splash some shadow on her eyes and color her lips, then head out the door. But today, she wanted to look extra good. Today was the day Sarah has worked so hard for all year.

Through the mirror, she could see the reflection of the pictures pinned spatially to the wall. She looked at them for a second. There were various poses with students, past and present. In the corner was the group shot of a 4th grade class she taught before her life changed forever. Next to it was the one of her holding up her diploma, the day she graduated college. Random teenagers and adults roamed that wall, alongside the many Get Well cards she had received while in the hospital. Sarah turned away before her eyes would gather with tears.

"No." she said to herself. "You will not cry today." There, her makeup was done, and she looked beautiful. Just in time as well, the van blew its horn outside. Sarah's husband entered the room and strode to her side.

"Ready?" John said as he slid behind her and grabbed the handles of her wheelchair. Before he pushed her forward, he bent down and whispered in her ear, "You look gorgeous, babe, you can do this. I believe in you."

Anticipation made the drive to the graduation hall seem longer than normal. Sarah stared out the window, trying to push the memories back down with little success. In the glass reflection,

she could see glimmers of that awful day. Sarah was a soldier in the reserves. She was called up to do a six month tour overseas. It seems like a lifetime ago when a buried flag bomb went off under the Humvee she was in. All she remembers is the pain and the bullets that filled the air like pollen.

Sarah closed her eyes in an attempt to erase those memories. John took her hand and squeezed, something he does to remind her she is safe. She looked at her husband with admiration. Without him by her side, she had no idea if she could have made it this far. He stood by her side through the rehabilitation. As she learned to live again without the use of her legs, John always picked her back up. Now, he is again by her side, encouraging her to do the impossible. Today, she needed all his strength to help her as well.

The Graduation Hall was packed with family and friends waiting to see the young men and women walk on stage to receive their diplomas. Sarah positioned herself on the stage next to the Alumni. Principal Myers shook her hand.

“Are you sure you’re ready for this?” he asked her. Sarah nodded, afraid that if she spook, her voice would betray the false confidence she was trying to show. Myers nodded back and left to take his place by the podium. Sarah found herself half listening to the speeches, dedications, and names of students as they walked out to take that sought after piece of paper. As the list made its way into the “M”s, the butterflies in Sarah’s stomach got worse. What if she couldn’t do this? What if she fails? She had worked so hard. Then Myers hushed the audience before calling the next graduate.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I know that you are all anxious to get this over with.” As he looked at the line of students. “But I would like to turn the microphone over to one of our esteemed teachers. She has headed up the Art program for five years now

and is a wonderful member of our staff. The students find her easy to talk to and praise her in the highest of ways. I would like to present to you Lt. Sarah Johnson.” Myers swept his hand towards Sarah as she rolled over to the microphone stand. Her moment has come, no butterflies could stop her now.

“Thank you,” she said as she took the microphone. “Three years ago, a young man entered my classroom with this ‘I don’t care’ attitude. I could see that he had potential, if he would only take the initiative. But instead, I saw him throwing it all away. He was failing all his classes and refused to try. But I would not give up. I kept pushing him until one day, this young man made a statement to me that stuck, hard.” She looked at the student standing at the top of the stairs. He knew she was talking about him. His eyes darted around in confusion.

“He told me that the day he graduate high school, was the day that I would get up and walk.” She turned her chair to face him and locked the wheels. “And on that day, I said “Joshua Miles, challenge accepted!”

Sarah barely heard the crowd roaring as she handed the microphone to Myers. She pulled her feet to the floor before planting her hands on the armrest. Using her upper strength, she lifted herself from the sit. As she steadied herself, she looked up to find Josh on his knees with his hands over his mouth in disbelief. Myers moved her chair out of the way before standing next to her, ready to catch her if she falters. But the butterflies in Sarah’s gut have been replaced by sheer determination. She would not falter.

Sarah moved a foot forward. The again with the other. She didn’t bother listening to the noise that bounce around the auditorium. She didn’t bother looking back to see how far she has gone. She focused all her strength on the table that held the pile of scrolls

to be handed out. Only when she touched that polished wood with her fingers, did she let out the breath that she didn't even know she was holding. She made it, her legs wobbled under her, exhausted from the effort but she felt astounded. She was handed a scroll to present to Josh, the one student that she spent hours tutoring and encouraging. He ran across the stage and wrapped his arms around her, lifting her from the floor. He whirled her around in a tight hug.

"Thank you," was all he could say as he lowered her into her waiting chair that has been rolled over. Then he laid his head into her lap and cried, that long awaited document that he had worked so hard for, forgotten on the stage.



AN EXTRAORDINARY DUTY

by Simone Olsen

As the anointing oil was poured, the fragrance of oranges, musk, roses, ambergris and cinnamon filled the altar of the royal church. Over eight thousand guests lining the pews of Westminster Abbey watched this ancient crowning ceremony. The momentous day saw the official recognition of Elizabeth II as Her Majesty the Queen. She took oath to Head the State and Nation of the United Kingdom and fifteen Commonwealth countries. Through her dedicated work in areas of government, the armed forces, and royal visits; she personifies duty and service to country.

A highlight of the English Parliament is the Queen's opening speech. Adorned in robes and her jewel-encrusted crown, she eloquently delivers her speech which outlines government policies and potential new legislations. After the ceremony, a colorful procession of horse-drawn carriages return the Queen to Buckingham Palace. The politicians then debate her speech. Another formal government role is her representation of Britain to the rest of the world through entertaining visiting Heads of State, receiving foreign ambassadors and making visits abroad in support of economic and diplomatic relations. With over sixty years on the throne, she has unequalled experience which Prime Ministers have been able to draw on. She meets with the Prime Minister once a week and also passes legislation. Furthermore, law and order is maintained and justice is carried out in her name. Court cases are prosecuted on behalf of the Crown and state the Crown versus the surname of the defendant. The Queen recognizes and honors Police Officers for gallantry or distinguished service by hosting ceremonies in the grand ballroom at Buckingham Palace where she presents medals. Both law enforcement officers and the armed forces are close to the Queen's heart. Her husband, sons and grandsons have served or are currently serving in the Armed Forces.

In addition to her law and order work, the Queen heads up the Armed Forces. She is the only person to declare war and peace. In a caring Christmas message to the troops, she pointed out that "courage and loyalty are not lightly taken." She emphasized that "it is a pledge which calls for sacrifice and devotion to duty." She commented "I always draw strength from your dedication, resolve and good humor. Throughout my life, my relationship with the Armed Forces has marked my admiration and deep respect for everything you strive to achieve on behalf of all of us." She visits service estab-

lishments and ships to meet service members and their families at home and abroad.

Indeed, royal visits and walkabouts are one of the Queens trademarks. They include opening new buildings, and visiting hospitals, schools and charities. Each visit is a celebration of achievement and community spirit. On one such visit to Oxford, the Queen was met with a warm reception of applause, loud cheers and excited screams. People had waited for weeks for this day that they would never forget. As she emerged elegantly from her chauffeur-driven car, faces illuminated with joy as dreams came true. She smiled and took her time greeting her well-wishers, stopping to chat and extending her white gloved hand to accept flowers. It was a leisurely affair. People were hanging out of building windows hoping to catch a glimpse of her, phones outstretched at the ready for a photo opportunity. As she strolled along, people ten-deep lined her path waving flags. School children with arms full of flowers were at the front, enchanted by the interaction. The visits are a shining example of service to country.

Notably this was a lesson instilled in her from childhood from her father, King George VI, who taught her that the “highest of distinctions is service to others.” The dedication of the Queen to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth personifies an outstanding example of duty and service to country.



HIDE-AND-GO SEEK

by Patty Scott

Hello! Hello, is anybody there?

“Yes, my name is Tommy Fritz, and I can’t find my little brother, can you help me find him please?”

“Well Tommy how did you get my number?”

I found it in the phone book Mr. Anderson. I looked in the detective department of the yellow pages, and your name was the first name I saw so I called you.

“Okay, how old are you Tommy?”

“I am seven years old”.

“Where do you live Tommy?”

“I live in Carson City, at 4203 Lakeshore Drive”.

“Where are your Parents?”

“My dad he lives far away, I don’t know where he is. He left us a long time ago. Mom’s here but, I don’t want her to know that I called you”.

“Why not Tommy?”

“Because it will make her really angry at me. And she hits me when she gets angry.

“Okay then Tommy we don’t want to make her angry do we?”

“No” replies Tommy.

“What’s your brother’s name?”

“His name is Stevie”.

“How old is Stevie Tommy?”

“He’s five”.

“What was he wearing”, Asks Detective Anderson?

“He was wearing his Sponge Bob jammies”

“Where do you think Stevie is Tommy?”

“I don’t know we were playing hide-and-go seek yesterday, and I just can’t find him”.

“Damn, I know business has been a little slow lately, but is this what I’ve been reduced to”, thought Detective Anderson. Helping a kid find his little brother during a fucking game of hide-in-go-seek.” Oh well”, he sighs,” As the old saying goes something is better than nothing”.

“Okay Tommy, do you know where he hid?”

“I think he hid in the basement where he always hides”.

“Well did you look in the basement?”

“I wanted to but the door is locked”.

“How did Stevie hide in the basement if the door is locked Tommy?”

“It’s just locked this one time”.

“Who locked the door Tommy?”

Mom and I took some bags to the basement last night, so I think she did”.

“Did you tell your mom that you can’t find Stevie”.

“Yes, but she told me to get out of her room and leave her alone”.

“Did she try to find Stevie, or anything Tommy?”

“No sir she said she didn’t want to talk about it”.

“Something’s just not right here”, Detective Anderson thought to himself.

“What school do you go to Tommy?”

“We don’t go to school, mom reads to us here at home”, said Tommy.

“Tommy I am going to ask you some questions and you have to be honest with me okay”.

“Yes sir”.

“Do your mom hurt you and Stevie?

“Yes sir, but only when she is really mad”.

“Have you or Stevie ever had to go to the hospital because your mom hurt you really bad?

“Yes sir, and mom tell us what to say before we have to talk to the doctors”.

“How bad has she hurt you and Stevie? Did she hurt your arm or your leg or something”.

“Yes sir she broke Stevie’s arm and he had a really bad head bump, the doctor said it was a cussion”.

“A concussion you mean Tommy, is that what you’re trying to say’.

“Yes sir, that”.

“Have she ever hurt you Tommy?

“Tommy, Tommy are you there?

“Yes sir”.

“Has she ever hurt you Tommy?

“Yes sir”, Tommy said as he began to whimper.

“How Tommy”

“When we are in the bed together, she makes me do things to her. And if I don’t she hits me”.

“Okay Tommy, I need to help you so you and Stevie won’t be hurt anymore okay”.

“Yes sir”.

“I am coming to your house Tommy, do not tell your mom that I am coming or who I am okay”.

“Okay”, Tommy answers.

“I am going to try to look around your house to see if I can find Stevie okay. Your mom can’t hurt me, I am a really big bald guy.

I will protect you okay”.

“Okay”.

The detective arrives at Tommy’s home. He introduces himself to Tommy’s mom.

“Yes may I help you? Asks Tommy’s mom”.

“Yes ma’am, I’m uh Detective Anderson and I am looking into a disturbance call that was reported coming from this address.

“A disturbance call”, she exclaims!

“If you don’t mind I would like to take a look around your house please”.

“And your name is ma’am, if you don’t mind me asking?

“It’s Mary Fritz”, she answers with caution.

“Well”, she said hesitantly,” I don’t know what you think you’ll find, but okay come on in”.

As Detective Anderson enters the house, in the corner stands a very frail little boy, who looks almost skeletal. There were dark circles around his eyes that sank deeply into its sockets. He looks as if he were a starving refugee from a third world country. This kid looks to be about four years old, he thought. Yet his mom is medium build in stature, neatly combed dark haired lady, standing there holding a cigarette between her two fingers, that displays well manicure nails, and doesn’t look as if she has missed a meal at all. Not being able to take his eyes off of the little boy, Tommy’s mom reminds Detective Anderson why he was there.

“Uh! Detective” she said,” You want to search my house”.

“Oh yes ma’am”, said Detective Anderson, trying to come to grips with the horror he just witnessed inside the house.

After the detective thoroughly searches the house, he finally stumbles upon the locked basement door.

“Could you unlock this door for me please ma’am”, he

asks

“I don’t have a key to that basement”, she said with a look of fear in her eyes.

“It could be on the chain with your other keys mom”, yells Tommy.

“Could I see your keys ma’am”, asks Detective Anderson”

“You don’t have the right to be searching my house without a search warrant Detective” she screams.

“Ma’am if you don’t unlock the door, I will go get the police and they will have a search warrant”.

“I have tried being the best mother I can be. I am raising them all by myself. I didn’t mean to hit him so hard” she said crying hysterically. I swear I love my boys, I would never intentionally hurt them”.

After gaining entrance to the basement, Detective Anderson spots a freezer.

“Surely I have seen enough of these movies, God I pray she didn’t do what I think she did”, he thinks to himself, as he grips the handle of the freezer.

As he lifts the top of the freezer to open it, there was, a black trash bag lying on top of an unusual looking bag. Detective Anderson looks inside of the trash bag, and gasps at what he discovers. It was a tiny hand. Oh my God he thought to himself, “Could this be, oh God no, where is the rest of Stevie? He asks himself aloud. Detective Anderson, notifies the police of what he has just found. When the police arrives, they insists that they secure the area and speak with Tommy’s mom, and that Detective Anderson talk to Tommy.

“Are you Tommy? Asks Detective Anderson.

“Yes sir”, replies Tommy.

“So I finally get to meet you. Do you know who I am”.

“Yes sir, you’re Detective Anderson from the phone book.

“Yes that’s right”, replies Detective Anderson.

“Are you hungry Tommy?

“No sir”, said Tommy,” I just want to find my little brother Stevie”.

“Well I’m going to need your help with that okay Tommy”.

“Okay”, replies Tommy.

“Tommy, I need you show me where you and your mom put the bags that you took to the basement last night? Asks Detective Anderson.

“Yes sir”, said Tommy

After collecting all of the hidden trash bags, they were thoroughly examined. The contents was identified as the dismembered remains of little Stevie Fritz.

“Why are the police down there, did they find Stevie”, Asks Tommy?

“Yes they found Stevie, Tommy” said the Detective in a solemn voice.

“Is he okay”, asks Tommy.

“I am afraid not Tommy, he’s having fun playing hide-and-go- seek with the angels now okay buddie”. Do you know what that means Tommy?

“Yes sir”, said Tommy, Grandma is with the angels too, she went last year.”

“It’s going to be okay Tommy”, said Detective Anderson, and that was a really good thing you did trying to get help to find your little brother. You should really be proud of yourself”.

As Tommy begins to cry he finds consolation in Detective Anderson’s arms. Detective Anderson pleads with the police to handle their

business outside, he feels that Tommy has been through enough already, and he didn't need to see his mother carted off in hand cuffs.

"Where's my mom? Asks Tommy.

Your mom is sick and she needs help okay, said Detective Anderson, and those people are going to help her." I want you to do me a big favor Tommy", ask Detective

Anderson," I need you to go with these nice people, they are going to take good care of you and when your mom is all better you can see her okay".

"Okay", Tommy nods.

"If you ever need me call me okay buddy", whispers Detective Anderson.

"Okay thank you sir", Tommy replies as he was placed in the care of Child Protection Services.

Before Tommy enters the car, he turns and gives Detective Anderson one last wave good-bye. With a heavy heart, Detective Anderson waves back. Detective Anderson shoves his hand in his pockets. Standing there in silence, he thinks to himself, how can a silly senseless phone call from a little kid, and a game of hide-and-go-seek, lead to something so Sinister. My only regret is that I couldn't save little Stevie", he thought as he plops down on the stoop in front of the house. As he drops his head he couldn't help but sob uncontrollably. He thought to himself "God oh my God, what happened here", why? And then he thanked God, because at least Tommy is safe now.



THE GREAT MAGNOLIA

by Patty Scott

It was a Saturday, the day before the Fourth of July, in 1960, that I found myself being shuffled out of bed by the sound of Mama's voice and the incandescent rays of the sun. There were plenty of cracks in the old house where I lived, and that was an invitation for the sunshine, and any tiny creature from the outside to come in. The floors were a beautiful sea of cherry oak wood, and so shiny that I would always find my reflection staring back at me. The wood was rich and sturdy, yet with the tiniest step I could hear it creek. It was a rather sizable house, but somehow Mama managed to keep it very clean inside and out. The huge screened porch had a circle of wicker chairs with large fluffy colorful pillows, and a large wicker table embedded in the middle. Mama used that wicker table to sit a cold pitcher of her homemade lemonade and homemade hot buttered cookies, which were better known as Tea Cakes, to all who were born and raised in the south. She prepared and served this tasty delicacy to the women in the neighborhood, who would visit to discuss the latest lynchings and the racial tensions in Mississippi.

We were always eager to go outside, because the yard was beautiful, well groomed, and offered plenty of room to play. Wild flowers in an array of colors and forms grew all around the house. Mama worked hard to grow those rare, and exquisite blooms. And then there was the beautiful magnolia tree. Every morning that I climbed out of bed, and peered out of my window, I could always catch a glimpse of that immensely beautiful tree that stood very firm in our front yard. The scent of its flowery blossoms would almost over take the aroma of the bacon and eggs that filled the

air. Mama had called everyone downstairs for breakfast that morning. As I twirled into the kitchen, I noticed that all of my brothers and sisters had beaten me to the table. You see, there were five of us, two boys and three girls. I was the oldest girl. I was nine at that time. Mama looked around the breakfast table, as if she silently counted each of us to make certain that we were all there. Mama asked, what had we planned for that day? As I settled into my chair, I told her that we were going to go to the church on the corner and play a game of kickball. As I glanced up, I saw a look of horror on Mama's face. She pleaded with us to find something else to do.

"Tomorrow is the Fourth of July," she said, "and there will be fireworks, lots of food and plenty of room to run and play at the park. Surely you all could wait until then."

My brother asked why we couldn't just go and play at the church on the corner. Mama warned us with a stern voice.

She said if we insisted on playing on that corner we needed to be careful. If we kicked the ball across the street just leave it, don't go get it. In a trembling voice, she told us the story of a ten year old colored boy who was lynched because he went to get his baseball that had landed in a white man's yard. Mama explained how they searched and searched for that boy. When they finally found him, he was hanging from an old poplar tree alongside other young boys who looked to be about his age, and at least three or four adult men. She said the bodies had been hanging there for so long, they looked as if they were about to drop to the ground. Mama told us that they all just hung there like some kind of strange rotten fruit. Their twisted mouths, their eyeballs rested on their cheeks, torn from their sockets, and it appeared as if the birds had preyed upon their necks. They had plucked away at it until

their bodies were just barely hanging on by a shred of flesh that was somehow spared from the feast. And the stench that filled the air, was something Mama said she would never forget for as long as she lived.

As tears welled in her eyes, Mama told us about the note that they left alongside the young boys crumpled clothing that laid on the ground, it read, "You can have this nigger boy's baseball, we'll keep the other two." As an adolescent, I could not visualize the extent of the racial indifference towards colored people. Mama never liked talking about the horrific injustices that the colored folks had endured, she just wanted us to enjoy our lives as children. I often wondered, how something as beautiful as the magnolia tree, could flourish from the bloody soils of Mississippi. And why colored folks were called such hateful names as niggers and pickaninnies. Mama warned us many times about the white folks neighborhoods and that corner. She said once we went past that corner, we would find ourselves in the wrong neighborhood, the point of no return she called it. That corner really frightened Mama, because there were a lot of lynchings in Mississippi, and it was mostly the colored boys and the colored men that fell prey to the white man's noose.

We were half-way through breakfast when Mama told us about another colored boy. He was fourteen year old Emmitt Till. While he visited his grand-daddy in Money Mississippi, he was kidnapped, tortured and killed because he whistled at a white woman. After we heard those ghastly stories, a dead silence fell over the kitchen. Suddenly there came a knock at the door that startled us, and we all jumped in fear. It was our friends, they beckoned us to come outside. As we all headed for the door, we promised Mama that we would not go past that corner. We quickly ran

and collected more friends, and with excitement, we rushed to the church to play. We had so many friends. Everyone in our neighborhood was colored and we got along really well. In Greenville, Mississippi, whites and coloreds lived in separate areas. White people often frequented the areas where only colored people lived. Depending on how the white man felt that day, if colored people were caught in the wrong place, the most they would have received was a beating. In many cases, if the colored person was male, young or old, they were lynched. There were times after being lynched, the remains of a naked corpse that had been severely burned, castrated, with missing ears and fingers, was left in the streets on display for the colored folks to see.

Mama and some of her neighborhood friends often spoke of the many atrocities that were afflicted upon the colored people from time to time. At a young age, news of the constant plight of the colored people in this country made it hard for me to believe that there were good white people. But there was this one particular white woman that showed compassion for the colored folks. Her name was Mrs. Ophillia. We later discovered that she was a volunteer civil rights worker. She looked to be about my mama's age, around thirty or so. She and many of the other white people who attended her church, were good people, God fearing people. And that proved that not all white people hated the colored folks. I remember the times Mrs. Ophillia and her friends from that church went into the colored neighborhoods and took food, clothing, and books to whomever needed them. There were many stories told of how those nice white people had risked their own lives, and saved the lives of many colored people in Greenville, Mississippi.

There was no race mixing of any kind allowed. The coloreds had their own schools, grocery stores, churches, barber shops, and

even their own hospitals. Colored folks even had separate drinking fountains and restrooms in places where coloreds and whites were thrown together out of necessity. Most of the time everything between the races was good, at least until a colored man, woman or child, accidentally wandered off into the wrong side of town, the white side of town. If you are caught in the white neighborhood, you best be dressed as a maid or a butler, because they were the only ones allowed in the forbidden territory, and that included the territory across the street from the church that Mama constantly warned us about. As we all hurried to the old church to play, I explained to our friends that the ball should not be kicked with too much force. With rebellious voices they asked why. I told them the story of the ten year old boy, the gruesome story mama had told us. Everyone stood and just stared with a look of fright in their eyes. After they realized what I had said, they all agreed to be careful when kicking the ball.

As we began to play, the excitement overtook our bodies and minds. The beginning of the day turned out to be a good day, as we took a rightful turn at kicking. It was when Sammy kicked the ball that the day took a frightful turn, and fear settled into our souls. With too much force, he kicked the ball past the corner. He had forgotten about the story I had just told him. Before we could grab ahold of him to stop him, he had already made it across the street. We all stood there frozen with fear. We watched as two very large, and very angry white men, stormed out of their houses and took a tight hold of Sammy's arms and dragged him up the street. As we turned and ran, it seemed as if time stood still. We yelled at the top of our lungs. Mama quickly ran outside, and with a voice of concernment, she asked us what was wrong. We all found ourselves talking all at once. I finally found a space to speak.

As I wept, I told Mama, “Sammy ran across the street and two white men grabbed him.”

Mama yelled, “Oh my God, no!” Her yell was visceral.

She ran down the street and rounded up everybody she could find. Along with Sammy’s mama and daddy, nearly all of the neighborhood men and women volunteered to join in the search for Sammy. I thought to myself, surely they wouldn’t harm a ten year old boy, and then reality set in. The boy Mama told us about, the one who tried to get his baseball back, he was only ten years old. As tears streamed down my cheeks, I said to Mama how terrible a price the colored people had to pay just for being born colored.

There was no time to think, no time to plan what should be done next or who to call. They gathered up as many boards, bats, guns, knives anything they could find to protect themselves in case they ran into any trouble trying to get Sammy back. As we neared the church, my body weakened at the fear of what we might find. After we turned the corner, we suddenly found ourselves unable to move. We held on to one another, as Sammy’s mama slumped to the ground in tears when she laid eyes on her son. There he sat. Yes, Sammy was safe, playing marbles in the sand. Sammy’s mama rushed to his side with excitement and relief, and she held onto him tightly as if she never wanted to let him go. Sammy’s mama asked “What had happened to him? What they did to him? And why they let him go?” Sammy told her that they looked all around, but the only tree they found to lynch him from was the Magnolia tree.

The Magnolia tree was plentiful in Mississippi. It was planted on every street corner and in nearly every yard. It was a very special tree. It was the state tree of Mississippi. They told

Sammy that the Magnolia tree was too beautiful of a tree, it was too sacred of a tree, too good to taint with nigger blood. After setting him free, they warned him never to cross those streets into their neighborhood again. We were all very thankful to God that Sammy was found safe and sound, and unrattled by that terrible event.

As a child, I had always loved and admired the magnolia tree. The purity of those big beautiful fragrant white flowers, the size of those petals that blossomed from it, and how it stood so tall and strong. But after that day it meant so much more. What happened that day gave the magnolia tree a whole new meaning? It was no longer just the beautiful magnolia, it became the great magnolia. Even now, every time I see that tree, I remember how it saved a life, how that great Magnolia had saved my friend Sammy's life.



BENEATH THE OAK TREE

by Sheerethia Scott

The music starts.

The doors open to reveal Julie in her gown; she looks stunning. Her gaze meets Jake's, the groom, and his smile lights up the entire chapel. My heart flutters; it's the same smile I fell in love with months ago. I look back to see Julie is only a few pews behind me.

She looks happy.

Julie passes my pew and smells of honey and roses. I dry my

palms on my pants as she reaches the front pew. Julie's mother stands to hug her, being mindful not to get any of her running mascara on the gown. She turns to her father who pushes her veil back and kisses her forehead.

They look happy.

Julie glides up the steps to Jake. She hands her bouquet of red and white roses to the maid-of-honor. She turns back to Jake and the ceremony begins. My heart races and I get light-headed, this is stupid. Why did I come here? I look to Jake.

"Does anyone object to this union?" The priest asks.

I straighten my tie and jacket. I stand using every ounce of my being to calm my wobbling knees.

"I do," I say.

All eyes dart to me. Whispers fill the room. Julie has tears in her eyes but mostly looks confused. The maid-of-honor wants to kill me; so does Julie's dad. The older lady sitting beside me snickers and her husband shushes her. After scanning the room my eyes go back to Jake. He has the biggest smile on his face. He walks down the stairs to a sea of gasps. My legs feel like Jell-O and I can barely breathe. He reaches my pew and stops in front of me.

Jake grabs my arm, "Thank God," he says before kissing me.

The gasps turn into small outcries as he takes my hand and walks me down the aisle away from everyone. I turn to Jake as we open the door.

He looks happy.



DAYDREAMING ABOUT LIFE

by Raleigh Shelton

Long stares into the distant future keep your mind guessing as to what it may be. You can never truly plan out a life that is so delicate as ours. To be slowly dying but on the verge of success is nothing but life's cruel joke. How comedic to have a one life show happening now as the audience around us watches, but only to loosen up from the drinks at the end. It is all entertainment. A beautiful distraction that helps ease whatever pain for the moment, such as a pill might do. But as the night grows old and moonlight covers the sun's path, everything is sane again. Night is a world away from day as love is neither near nor lost.

...

As an aging couple shares arms before a sunset, one feels the other fall asleep. The red rose turns pale as the new bloom cries. It is and it was, but the petals will soon ride the air away. Forever now the lover loves what was, but the love will stay what is until the end of the love. Is this Heaven?

...

Heaven is described as a place of gold and jewels, but as these have value on Earth why must they have value in a place where it is of no value. The gates are described to consist of pearls, but to admire such a beauty would be to desire it and thus turning the observer's feelings into greed. And as greed is a sin, how must one enter Heaven?

The first breath of a newborn signifies a beginning of an empty mind that speaks of no language, knows of no culture, and thoughts are non-existent. Pure and emotionless, he will soon be overcome by this world. Crying tears of joy or sadness for this?

...

As crying a tear of emotion is only done by the human species, other animals must release these feelings through different means. Sounds of sorrow may be heard, but these only echo into blackness. These echoes will travel the world without anyone hearing. It is happening now, do you hear it?

...

To be alone is the most frequent cause of loneliness, but some feel more alone with someone. Should this end a search for a relationship in life? Everyone is an artist with a mind of opinions. I say opinions because actual truth is irrelevant to life. These opinions make up how you perceive the world. Eyes are the vision, but the brain is telling you what to think of a matter. Judgment.

...

Death is a reflection back onto life. A reflection of water has a surface that is mirrored back onto what you know, but beneath that layer of light is another world. Something most people call heaven and hell. The two cities are known as good and evil. If good and evil were combined into one city, then what would become of this? A perfect disaster of love between split relationships. This special kind of lifestyle is in a different world. One we know too well. Earth.



THE RISK

by Renee Smith

The day was quiet and gloomy; the air cold as ice. I sat in my little reading nook by the window and fireplace with Bella, my cat, snuggled up at my feet. We had been sitting for hours, Bella looking out at pedestrians walking the street and myself gazing in deep thought. We both had the same, bored facial expressions on our faces but I'm sure Bella's was for a completely different reason. Mine, however, was for a complicated reason. *Love*. I had never been the girl to constantly be in a relationship or feel the need for male companionship. The last asshole that I fell head over heels for ended up leaving me for one of his teaching aids at the university where he taught. It was the worst heartbreak I had ever experienced, and to top it all off we were together for three, beautiful years. I don't look at it as a mistake, but more of a lesson. I know what to look out for and I feel it has made me much more guarded over my heart. I haven't gone on a date with anyone in over two and a half years. I decided to put all my thoughts back together and head to the coffee shop to try enjoy the rest of my day.

"Rough night?" Luke asked as my barista handed me my large cup of plain black coffee.

"Just up late writing," I replied, not sounding too excited. I was hoping he would get the hint I didn't want to talk to him. I was never really one who liked to be hit on while enjoying my coffee or my meals.

"You're the only lady I have ever seen to drink your coffee straight black," he said with a small chuckle.

Lady. No one had ever called me a lady before, I then shot

him a soft smile.

“I guess I’m not like most ladies, then” I replied and finally got a look at his face. He had soft-looking, chestnut hair that kind of curled at the ends. It had a permanent swoop at the front that looked like it was from him running his hands through his hair constantly. He had a precise jaw line and beautiful, hazel eyes that looked like they were looking straight into my soul when he spoke to me.

“Is this a good or bad thing?” he asked as he sipped on his latte.

“I guess you’d have to know me to be the judge of that,” I said as I felt my cheeks get warm and rosy.

We talked, for hours at the little coffee shop I lived three blocks away from. Luke was very easy to talk to and I learned a lot about him in that little encounter. Luke was twenty-six, just moved here to North Carolina all the way from Florida. He loved cats, liked to go fishing sometimes, played some guitar here and there, played soccer at the high school he attended, and works for the local newspaper company in my city. I had never felt this deep of a connection with someone so quickly. Luke caught my interest for sure.

“It’s getting late,” I said as I realized we had been talking for over two hours.

“You’re right,” he said softly, and I knew he was about to ask to see me again. “Same time, same place tomorrow?” he asked.

“Sounds wonderful,” I said with a grin.

We both left and went our separate ways and all I could think of when I got home was how much fun I had that day. There was just something about him, something that ignited a spark in my inner soul that I couldn’t let go of. I made my way home that night and

could not stop thinking about the day I had. Bella was waiting for me at the door, as usual, wanting her dinner. I eventually put my night clothes on, started a movie, and hopped in bed with Bella. Excitement was on my mind for a couple of hours before I finally drifted into deep sleep. I woke up to Bella pawing at my nose, like she knew I had something planned that day, and was wanting me up to get ready. I couldn't wait to see Luke again, but there was still that part of me that wanted to skip out. As much fun and good conversation as we had yesterday, I was still very guarded about seeing someone. I couldn't help it though, that's what happens when you get screwed over in your past relationship. I sat on the porch, drinking my coffee and smoking my morning cigarette, thinking about all these recent events and how I had been feeling.

"What should I do about this?" I asked Bella as she nuzzled at my feet.

I just couldn't stop thinking if this is a risk I should take for once. It was all so new and scary to me again.

"It's so lovely to see you again," Luke said as I walked up to the coffee shop.

"Thank you," I said as I could feel myself blush.

We sat for awhile out on the patio, it was a very pretty day. I sipped on a white mocha this time and he was having something with hazelnut from what I could smell. We were getting to know each other more, talking about our families and growing up. I had learned so much more about him this time. We spoke of our political views, we spoke of what we wanted to accomplish in life, and we talked of heartfelt topics like what the penalty should be for animal cruelty. I learned about his family, and his older brother, Mike, who he looked up to and was such a huge role model to him. I told

him the little things that made me happy. The smell of a new book from the book store that I was dying to read, morning cuddles with Bella, and the way I could sing at the top of my lungs to that Kings of Leon song in my car on the way to work. I could tell by the way he was looking at me that he was so interested in hearing about me. I tried not to notice, but I couldn't help but stare at his beautiful smile he gave me whenever I began to laugh about a topic. He made me feel good, he made me feel comfortable on our date and that it was okay to be silly around him. It was so nice to sit and actually have a conversation with someone rather than them asking me to go back to their place to "hang out." I knew exactly what that meant, and I was never okay with it. A few hours passed and we were finally starting to say our goodbyes.

"So, I know this is a shot in the dark but I was wondering if you'd like to go to this art exhibit with me this Saturday? You can say no, I just would love to have you as my date" he asked.

I thought to myself for a second before answering. No one had ever asked me on a date like this. Usually it's the same old dinner or a movie type thing.

"Of course, I would love to be your date," I said, excited.

A look of happiness and relief fell onto his face, which made me happy too. We parted ways and on my way home all I could think of was Luke. All I could think of was this is a risk I am willing to take. No other man had ever been so interested in getting to know me on a level like that. Luke was different, I could tell. Saturday couldn't come fast enough; I was eager to see where the night would bring us and excited to see where this would go for the both of us.



THE WEDDING

by Hayden Thorn

I pull into the garage after a ten hour shift. I open the car door and stumble out. Man, I'm pretty much dead on my feet. I can hear the kitchen stereo going on the other side of the wall. I open the door and smile as I see my beautiful wife swinging and swaying her hips to the beat. She stands at the stove, stirring something that smells heavenly. I place my briefcase on the kitchen counter and make my way over. "Hello sweetie, what smells so delicious?" She places the spoon down on the stove and turns around to greet me. She throws her arms around my neck and says softly, "your favorite, seven cheese lasagna." I give her a flirtatious smirk and a pat on the bottom. "I knew there was a reason I married you." She throws her head back with the most beautiful laugh I have ever heard. God, I love this woman. I look around the room and notice that our twins are nowhere in sight. I walk into the den off the kitchen and only see a few toys scattered on the floor. I stick my head down the hallway and notice that the house is unusually quiet. I make my way back to my wife at the kitchen stove. "Uh? Honey? Where are the twins?" My wife doesn't turn from the stove and answers me distractedly, "I took them a bath earlier and let them hangout outside." I cock my head to the side and ask her incredulously, "why?" A whole new air takes over my wife and she spins around angrily. "Because they were underfoot and I needed them out my hair to cook dinner." I watch her cautiously before turning and making my way to the patio doors off the den. I slide back the glass door and step out. I peer into the yard but don't see the twins anywhere. An eerie feeling runs down my back, causing my whole body to shiver. My feet acquire a mind of their own and begin a slow trek to the

secluded alcove near the back fence. As I get closer, I can smell faint traces of metal wafting through the air. I take the last few steps around the big rock and drop to my knees. Hanging from a tree, that my wife and I carved our initials in, are my twins. Their bodies are red, swollen, and covered in puffy blisters. I place my hands on the ground and barf up the tuna salad I had for lunch. I fall to the side and begin to sob uncontrollably. I look back to the twins and notice their bodies are completely naked. I run to the patio, grab the blanket off the chair, and drape it over their bodies. I run in the house, into the kitchen, and see my wife preparing plates. "What did you do?" She calmly places a plate on both high chairs placed at our little dining set. "Did you hear me woman?" She doesn't respond. She grabs two dinner plates from the cabinet and spoons lasagna onto them. I run to the den and dial 911. "I need help. My babies, they're hurt. You have to come." The dispatcher runs through a series of questions that only infuriates me. None of what he says pertains to what's happening. I yell my address into the phone and order him to send help immediately. I run back into the kitchen to see my wife sitting at the table eating our dinner. I kneel before her and plead with her for answers. "Please, just tell me why." She continues to fork lasagna in her mouth silently. I groan out loud and rush out to the back yard. The wind has picked up and the metallic smell of blood has spread throughout the yard. When I reach the twins, my whole being seizes. The blanket has fallen and severed their skin at the shoulders. "Please God, Why?" As I feel myself lose consciousness, I hear the faint sounds of sirens approaching in the background.

The End



ONE MORE TIME

by Hayden Thorn

“You’re dead,” I hear behind me.

“Yeah, I kinda figured that much,” I reply.

A tall guy with short, dark hair walks closer to me, his hands in his pockets; the blaze from the car covers his face in an orange glow, “Damn, that sucks. Where’s your body?”

I point a few yards ahead of the spectacle.

Dying is not that bad. It is warm and bright and not at all scary. I always thought that when I died it would be terrifying; I would succumb to a black void and fade into nothingness or meet a God I did not believe in. I do not know which would be worse. But Hollywood lied, none of that happens.

I remember driving down the road, it was dark, and “...Baby One More Time” was playing on the radio. Can I just say that I resent the fact that I died picturing Britney Spears in a school girl uniform? Beside the point, I remember swerving and hitting a tree then going through the windshield. It actually did not hurt, probably because I was already dead going through, but it was comforting to not be in pain for the last moments of my short life. Then the clichéd white light shit happened – so I guess the movies got something right – and the next thing I knew I was standing over my asphalt covered body. Rocks are not a good look for me. It is weird knowing that you are dead but still feeling alive.

I can smell the oil and burning fabric. I can hear the crackling fire, feel its warmth.

“I guess they’re right about seatbelts,” he jokes.

“I’d much rather be out here than in there,” I say pointing to the now engulfed pile of metal, “So who are you?”

“Luca, pleased to meet you, although I wished it’d been

under different circumstances,” he says extending a hand.

“Riley Barnes,” I say and shake his hand, “So what is this place?” I ask.

“Heaven, Hell” he answers, crossing his arms, “It’s whatever you need it to be.”

“Shouldn’t there be white clouds and angelic choirs of seventy-two virgins then? Or shouldn’t we be surrounded by eternal flames and criminal defense lawyers?”

“To be fair there is fire,” he retorts, motioning towards the fire with his head.

“Cute.”

The fire grows bigger and the flame touches my arm. It is warm but it does not burn. I move into the fire more and I am consumed by warmth. It feels nice, peaceful even.

“See, you’re a natural heathen,” he says.

“How long have you been here?” I ask walking away from the fire.

“I lost count a while ago.”

“Is it lonely?”

“It isn’t a party twenty-four-seven, but it’s not bad. Sometimes you’ll run into people you used to know. It’s odd to see that they’re still going on with their normal lives.”

“So death is just as shitty as life?”

“Not quite,” he smirks, “Check this out.”

Luca grabs my hand and closes his eyes. Just as I am about to ask him what the hell he is doing I see the world flash by us. The trees look like green blurs, cars zip by us as if on fast-forward. The sun quickly rises over the horizon. We stop in the middle of town, the clock on the bank on the corner of 1st and Jefferson reads 11:47 am.

“What the hell was that?” I ask trying not to lose my balance.

“I don’t know,” he replies, aloof, “One day I was thinking about my house and all of the sudden I was shot there almost instantly.”

“That is fucking awesome,” I say matter-of-factly.

I look around at the town square. Luca was right, life continues without you when you die. My death did not affect anyone here. The group of boys fawning over the girl who got boobs over the summer, a desperate and lonely mother sipping her fourth glass of red wine for lunch, an unemployed man leaving his third interview this week arriving to his Civic to find an expired meter and ticket waiting for him; they were all alive and unaware of my fiery demise.

“It’s weird, right? To see the world go on without you,” Luca says waving at a baby in a stroller.

“Can he see us?” I question.

“Yeah, I don’t know why but kids and animals can see us,” he turns to me, “It makes this so-called existence less miserable.”

Luca looks back to the baby and makes faces, he smiles and giggles.

“Innocence maybe?”

“Maybe,” he sighs.

I look off and notice an intense rumbling coming from the distance. Luca looks up, worried.

“What’s that?” I ask.

“The hospital.”

“What’s going on?”

Luca grabs my hand and we shoot through town and stop a ways back from the hospital. Hundreds of people are gathered

around the entrance of the building trying to claw their way in.

“What the hell is happening?” I shout over the brawl.

“Birth,” he replies calmly, “Have you ever heard of reincarnation?”

“Like being reborn?”

“Exactly, babies are empty vessels before they’re born. A soul has to reach them during birth.”

“What happens if no one gets to it in time?”

“That’s a still born.”

The sea of lost souls shriek and struggle to get into the hospital, “Have you ever tried to get in?”

“Once, it obviously didn’t work out in my favor,” he forces a smile.

“Why haven’t you tried again?”

“It takes a lot of energy to get past that many souls.”

“Why’d you want to go back? This place seems fine.”

Luca looks to his feet, “I miss feeling my heart beat. Being in this place is like being in a constant dream. It’s like the things you feel or smell are just memories. You don’t realize what you took for granted until you can no longer have it. I want to eat pizza one more time or have meaningless sex. I want to listen to the Spice Girls and enjoy how cheesy they are.”

A tear begins to well up in Luca’s eye but he dismisses it.

Would I miss these things too? Do I want to watch life continue without me for possibly eternity? Did I take my life for granted?

I look to the brawl then back at Luca. “I’m down for pizza and the Spice Girls.”

“What do you mean?” He asks

“I don’t want to watch life, I want to live it. Let’s work to-

gether and force our way in the hospital. It's not like we have anything better to do with our time."

Luca looks passed me to the hospital, "Why would you do that for me?"

"I wasn't the greatest person when I was alive. I'll just say it, I was a cunt," I say laughing, "So why not do some good while I'm dead?"

Luca smiles and grabs my hand. We shoot towards the crowd. Once we get close we slow down and make it three-quarters of the way to the entrance. The closer we get to the hospital the darker and hazier it becomes.

"Get ready!" Luca shouts right before we come to a harsh halt.

Waves of hits come over me. I see people throwing punches but they do not feel like they once did. They feel as if a wall is hitting you. Luca holds tightly to my hand and sprints forward sending people flying back.

I look to my right to see a woman holding a child pushing her way through the crowd with ease while a man twice her size succumbs to the crowd and disappears. Luca looks over to witness the same thing.

He grabs my arm and shouts over the crowd, "Stay away from children; innocent souls are strongest!"

I look back to where the woman was and see her deeper into the brawl. Luca begins shoving people back more intently. Souls that were too weak to withstand the hits disappear into the distance. I mimic what he does and knock people back. I put more force behind the blows and send them back even farther. Others souls notice that we are working together and attack us in groups, berating us relentlessly. My hand starts to slip from Luca's. His

grip tightens.

Luca turns back to me, “Don’t give up! Fight it!”

I adjust my grip on Luca and attack feverously. Souls fly into the distance. I had not noticed before how much we had moved; I can see the doors. The woman with the child is behind us now but gaining on us. She looks me in the eye and marches towards us; waves of people blast from around her.

“Luca we need to go now!” I shout.

Luca turns to see the woman closing the gap between us. He shouts something but the screams surrounding the child drown him out. Luca takes advantage of the added energy and blast the few people in front of us away to make it to the entrance. We make it inside and slam the doors closed as the woman makes it to the entry. Luca slumps down to the ground and I join him.

Silence.

The white light I saw when I died engulfs the inside of the hospital.

“Now what?” I ask finding it weird that I do not need to catch my breathe.

Luca stands up, “I guess we’ll find out,” he answers extending his hand to me.



BEGONIAS

by Hayden Thorn

“She’s been out there for hours,” Johnny said, sipping luke-warm coffee while watching his mother in the garden. It was passed 9pm but the backyard was lit up with outdoor flood lights.

“Leave her be,” Colton said, wrapping his arms around Johnny’s waist. “We’ve barely had any time to ourselves since we got here.”

Colton kissed Johnny’s neck, he shivered and laughed from the stubble on Colton’s chin tickling him.

“With all the disappearances lately,” Johnny explained, “I’m worried about her being out there this late.”

“She’ll be fine, nobody is going to mess with her with that big ass dog out there with her,” Colton replied, sliding his hand down Johnny’s back and into his shorts. “Why don’t we go to bed?”

Johnny turns and jokingly slapped Colton, “I am not that kind of lady, Sir!”

Both guys laugh. They kiss while walking to the stairs. Johnny stops at the back door.

“Hey, Mom, we’re going to bed,” Johnny called out to his mother.

Bree looks up from her garden. “Okay, Johnny,” she called back, “You two have a goodnight!”

She waved them off to bed and went back to tending her garden. After seeing the guest bedroom light turn off, Bree tossed her shining silver spade behind her, turned off the flood lights, and grabbed the dull and muddied shovel. She began digging, striking a hard object. She dug a bit more around the object to reveal Greg McKluskey. It had only been three weeks since he had been buried; she thought, *why had he decomposed so much?*

Bree shrugged it off and pulled Karen McKluskey out from under the house. Karen was gagged and bound at the wrists and ankles. She had just regained consciousness, seeing Bree smiling with a shovel lurching over her brought a confused look of horror to her face.

“You always wanted to know how I kept my begonias so pristine,” Bree acknowledged, shoving Karen into the garden next to her husband.



BREAKING THE NEWS

by Courtney Treadaway

They had been walking down the sidewalk for some time now. It was dark and beginning to sprinkle. There were two more blocks to her apartment and she hoped the rain would hold off until they arrived. He was holding her hand, like he always did, and as they picked up their pace he squeezed it a little tighter. When they finally made it to her apartment, he quickly followed her in to escape the rain that was now falling heavily.

“Do you even own an umbrella?” he asked, laughing.

“Um... Do *you* even own an umbrella?” she replied, as she closed the door behind them.

“Sure, I do.”

“Well then, where is it?”

“Good question.”

As they took off their coats, her mind continued to replay

how she was going to tell him. He had seemed distracted at dinner, so the timing didn't feel right. She wondered if he would actually stay the night this time; it would give her more time to break the news. They had been together for over two years now, and he used to practically live with her, but recently, it seemed like he always had somewhere else to be.

"So, what do you want to do tonight?" she asked.

"Eh... I don't know... What time is it?"

"It's only nine-thirty," she answered. He followed her to the couch and sat down next to her. She studied him, waiting for a response. He looked nice tonight; she noticed he was wearing new clothes, which was strange, since the only time he ever went shopping was with her.

"Are those new shoes?" she asked.

"Oh, yeah, picked them up the other day," he responded, nervously scratching his head.

"You didn't tell me you were going shopping."

"Oh, I didn't even think about it, just needed to get a few things."

"But, you hate shopping," she said, questioningly. She couldn't think of a single time in the past where he had chosen to go shopping on his own.

Looking at her, he wrapped his arm around her shoulders and laughed, "What's the big deal?"

She looked back at him, but said nothing. He leaned in closer and kissed her. It was one of those "let's change the subject before this gets bad" kind of kisses. A smile broke her lips and she decided to let it go. She rarely got to see this playful side of him anymore; she missed it

"Do you want to stay tonight?" she asked, hoping he would.

"I don't know. I probably should head home pretty soon. I've got work in the morning."

As he said this, the smile fell from her face. A few months ago, she couldn't get him to leave, but for the past few weeks she couldn't *beg* him to stay. She looked away from him and stood up, trying not to show how upset she was. She had just taken the test that morning, so she wasn't sure how she felt about the news, herself. The way had been acting was only making her feel more uneasy.

"I guess you should go ahead and go then. It's getting late."

He gave her a confused look. "Are you mad?"

Usually, she wasn't the type to get angry, or start a fight. Until recently, they rarely fought, they had always been very happy together. But, something was different. He wasn't looking at her the way he used to. She could *feel* that he didn't want to be there with her.

"Where have you been lately, Ollie?" she asked, with sadness in her voice. "Ollie" was her nickname for him. Everyone else called him Oliver.

"What are you talking about?" he asked, his voice a little tense.

"I mean, what's wrong? You used to actually *want* to be here with me, and now, you're always somewhere else. What changed?" She felt her heart rate rising as she spoke. Then she realized that he wasn't paying attention to her. He was staring at his phone. "Are you serious?" she asked, in an exhausted voice.

"What? Nothing has changed," he said, dropping the phone on the coffee table. "Where are you getting this from?"

"I am getting this from you, Oliver. Actually, I'm not getting *anything* from you. That's the problem."

“Well there is nothing wrong with me. I’ve just been ... busy.”

“Busy? This is the first time I’ve seen you in a week. We used to see each other every day.” She watched him as he sat there, staring back at her. The blank expression on his face made her want to scream.

“Why are you doing this again?” he asked, obviously frustrated.

She had only seen him angry a handful of times. He was a considerably easy-going person, known for using his laughable charm to get out of tough situations. But he didn’t seem to care about this situation. In fact, he hadn’t seemed to care about much at all for the past few weeks. Every time she tried to get through to him, it only made things worse.

“I miss you,” she said, with tears in her eyes.

He dropped his forehead into his palms, rubbing his eyes, and shaking his head in frustration, “I don’t know what to say.”

That wasn’t the response she’d expected. A tear rolled down her cheek, “Is there something you’re not telling me?” She stepped closer to him, but he made no move toward her. Tonight was obviously not a good time to tell him that she was pregnant. Before, she thought he would have been happy to hear the news, but now, she wasn’t so sure. He was like a completely different person.

He stared at her with the same blank expression, “No, I’m just going to go. I can’t do this,” he said, as he stood up and headed for the door.

She watched as he put on his coat, “You’re really just going to leave?” she asked, tears rolling down her cheeks.

He looked at her but gave no response, then walked out and closed the door behind him.

She noticed his phone still sitting on the coffee table, so she picked it up and walked toward the door to try and catch him. As she reached for the door knob, the phone fell out of her hand and went crashing into the floor. When she picked it up the screen lit up with three missed calls and a text message.

Who is Anna?



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The Savoir Faire faculty advisors accept submissions of poetry, short stories, essays, and visual artwork year-round.

Please visit www.bpcc.edu/savoirfaire to fill out a submission form, and then e-mail your literary work as a Microsoft Word file or your visual artwork as a high resolution image to savoirfaire@bpcc.edu.